



Do I Really Need a Sleep Apnea Test?

Sleep Apnea Tests for Commercial Truck Drivers

Concentra® understands why some truck drivers question whether a sleep apnea test is necessary during a DOT physical. We wanted to shed light on obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), the most common type of sleep apnea, and explain why Concentra medical examiners may refer a driver for an OSA test.

What is sleep apnea?

Sleep apnea is a common disorder in which you have erratic breathing pauses while you sleep. These breathing pauses – known as apnea events – can last anywhere from a few seconds to several minutes and can lead to excessive daytime sleepiness and performance problems (e.g., drowsy driving).

Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) occurs when the soft tissue in the back of the throat relaxes during sleep and blocks the airway, causing snoring and apnea events that can occur several times in one hour. During the course of sleep, normal breathing typically restarts, but it can be accompanied by loud choking sounds or snorts.

Three Types of Obstructive Sleep Apnea

	This level of sleep apnea disqualifies a driver if untreated.	
Mild	Moderate	Severe
Involuntary sleepiness during activities that require little attention (e.g., watching TV, reading)	Involuntary sleepiness during activities that require some attention (e.g., meetings, presentations)	Involuntary sleepiness during activities that require more active attention (e.g., talking, driving)
5-14 apnea events per hour	15-30 apnea events per hour	30+ apnea events per hour

The Importance of OSA Testing

- Truck transportation is rated as the most dangerous industry due to the number of work-related deaths.
- Sleep apnea is a major contributor to daytime drowsiness, which could prove deadly for commercial truck drivers and other drivers and passengers on the road.
- Truck drivers with undiagnosed sleep apnea or those who fail to adhere to sleep apnea treatment have higher crash rates.
- Drivers with undiagnosed or untreated sleep apnea have higher rates of high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke, as well as higher health care costs.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Is a sleep apnea test required for CDL certification?

The short answer is no. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) does not specify that sleep apnea testing is a required procedure for CDL certification; **however, FMCSA does require that a medical examiner applies the Pulmonary Standard when evaluating the health of a commercial truck driver.**

Physical Qualifications for Drivers: Pulmonary Standard [49 CFR 391.41 (b) (5)]

(b) A person is physically qualified to drive a motor vehicle if that person:

(5) Has no established medical history or clinical diagnosis of a respiratory dysfunction likely to interfere with his/her ability to control and drive a commercial motor vehicle safely;

OSA falls under the category of a **respiratory dysfunction that may interfere with safe vehicle operation**; therefore, if you are a driver with some of the risk factors associated with OSA, a Concentra medical examiner may refer you to a sleep specialist.

Concentra is providing this information as a courtesy. Concentra does not endorse, sponsor, or affiliate with any specific sleep medicine specialist, clinic, diagnostic center, or program. Concentra does not require the individual to be seen by any specific sleep health provider. This information does not guarantee insurance coverage of any or all services, testing, and/or treatment. Individuals are encouraged to verify insurance coverage with their carrier prior to seeking care at any specific vendor, clinic, physician, or specialist.

Sleep Apnea Self-check

There are many signs, symptoms, and risk factors for sleep apnea. Take a self-check to see if you're at risk.

Statement	Yes	No
I can be heard snoring heavily through the walls.		
I've been told that I stop breathing while asleep.		
I've been told that I choke or gasp for air while asleep.		
I wake up with a dry mouth and/or sore throat.		
I suffer from morning headaches.		
I experience daytime drowsiness.		
I am age 40 or older.		
I have been diagnosed with high blood pressure and/or diabetes.		
I have a BMI of 25 or greater.		
My neck size is at least 17 inches (male). My neck size is at least 16 inches (female).		

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)

If you answered "yes" more than twice, you may be at risk. You should talk to your primary care physician about seeing a sleep medicine specialist.

What to Do If Diagnosed with OSA

You and/or your doctor should contact the Concentra medical examiner to determine your fitness to operate a commercial motor vehicle and to discuss treatment options and next steps.